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Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between 1 September 2009 and 30 September 2010, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/6. It reviews the situation of Palestinian women and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional arrangements. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2010/6 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation in order to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2010/4), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fifth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 September 2009 to 30 September 2010 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations entities or individual experts that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including ESCWA, the United Nations country team for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. In this regard, the United Nations country team has coordinated contributions to the report by the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now part of UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

II. Situation of Palestinian women

4. The reporting period was characterized by efforts to resume negotiations between the parties on all permanent status issues, a volatile situation on the ground throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the deepening divide between Gaza and the West Bank (see A/65/35, para. 4). Systematic engagement by the United States of America and other members of the Quartet with the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships and other stakeholders in the region led to the resumption of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians on 2 September 2010. That had been preceded by several rounds of proximity talks assisted by the United States. The League of Arab States also engaged actively within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative, including meetings with the Quartet (ibid., para. 5).

5. The consequences of years of occupation and conflict and multiple political and economic crises in 2009, particularly in Gaza where the Israeli military operation "Cast Lead" undermined social services, infrastructure and homes, continued to be felt.[1] While initial estimates indicate that economic growth accelerated in 2009 and real growth in the West Bank and Gaza was about 6.7 per cent, conditions in the Gaza Strip remained difficult.[2] Changes in Israeli policy regarding entry of material — from a "positive" list of goods allowed into Gaza to a "negative" list of items that would be prohibited or restricted from entry — brought some relief to the population, but remained insufficient to address the full range of socio-economic needs.[3]

6. The expansion of Israeli settlements continued in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (see A/65/35, para. 5). A total of 230 cases of house demolitions and evictions were documented through August 2010 in East Jerusalem and "Area C".[3] As of July 2010, approximately 61 per cent of the barrier had been completed. In contradiction to the 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the barrier continues to deviate significantly from the 1967 Green Line into Occupied Palestinian Territory in the West Bank. When completed, approximately 85 per cent of the barrier will run inside the West Bank (see A/65/35, para. 34). Free movement in the West Bank continued to be obstructed by Israel even though the number of checkpoints was reduced (ibid., para. 7) during the reporting period, contributing to greater freedom of movement between Palestinian urban centres, East Jerusalem excluded.[3] As at the end of August 2010, there were some 500 closure obstacles throughout the West Bank[4] (compared with 618 in August 2009; see A/65/380, para. 19), where there were continued restrictions preventing Palestinians from using key roads and accessing East Jerusalem as well as other areas isolated by the barrier. Furthermore, there was no improvement regarding access of Palestinians to farming and grazing areas, as well as water resources, located in Area C.[3] The humanitarian needs were becoming more acute due to inadequate water quality. In East Jerusalem and the West Bank water sources were closed off to establish settlements and military zones.[1] Due to its high salinity, 80 per cent of the water supply in Gaza is not fit for human consumption.[1]

7. The divide among major Palestinian factions continued to affect the lives of ordinary Palestinians, especially in Gaza, and prevented Palestinians from uniting in support of the Palestinian Authority (see A/65/35, para. 8). The Gaza Strip remained under the de facto control of Hamas (see A/65/380, para. 26).

8. Although the political situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, related both to the Israeli occupation and to the divide among major Palestinian factions, affects all individuals, women and girls are affected in distinct ways.

9. At the end of 2009, formal labour force participation of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was among the lowest levels globally: 15.2 per cent

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[1] UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action Report 2010*.

[2] World Bank, Brief on West Bank and Gaza (March 2010).

[3] Contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

[4] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Monitor* (August 2010).

in the West Bank, down from 15.8 per cent in the first two quarters of 2009,[5] and 9.1 per cent in the Gaza strip.[6] According to a study conducted by UNESCO and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics on market factors that discourage women from joining the labour market, some 60 per cent of women in the formal labour force are employed in education, textiles, clerical work, farming and agriculture. ESCWA reports that the Palestinian National Authority and UNRWA continued to be the two main employers of women.

10. While no legal barriers prevent women from entering into businesses or economic-related contracts, engaging in autonomous economic activity has meant increased mobility for some women. Most must carefully navigate social norms in order to avoid family conflict since women must often obtain the permission of brothers and husbands to work.[7] Few women occupy high-level positions, and wage gaps between women and men persist. Men are given priority in hiring processes, and young women wait four times as long as young men to find work.

11. A survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics suggests that the majority of women who are out of the labour force are mostly young (15-34 years of age) married women without children. Some 45 per cent of these women have given up seeking employment (31 per cent in the West Bank and 63 per cent in the Gaza Strip) due to previous unsuccessful job search.[8] However, in the absence of male income security, following high levels of unemployment among men (38.6 per cent in May 2010),[5] additional burdens have been placed on women to earn an income in order to meet the basic needs of their families.

12. Many women, in particular middle-aged women and women with low levels of education, turn to a range of informal activities, from petty trading in Gaza, to grocery shopkeeping, sewing, agriculture and livestock production. Many informal activities have benefited from microcredit schemes introduced by aid agencies, however, with mixed results. In some cases, women borrowed money to support their husbands' economic activities, and in other cases they were constrained by the strict repayment policies of the lender. Lack of raw materials or goods mobility, in combination with a massive decline in people's purchasing power, has imposed challenges on those projects and their success.[7]

13. Imposed movement restrictions and the lack of a means of transport constituted crucial barriers to employment for women. According to case studies conducted in the West Bank and Gaza, public transport covers more than 70 per cent of the transport needs of women.[9] However, the combination of movement restriction and gender stereotypes, schedules that do not meet women's needs and public (verbal or physical) harassments have resulted in restricted access to transport for women. Additionally, a lack of fare integration has led to higher

[5] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Labour Force Survey (October-December 2009): Round (Q4/2009)", cited in the contribution received from the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

[6] UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, "MDG attainment in the Palestinian context" (2010).

[7] World Bank, Brief on checkpoints and barriers (2010).

[8] According to a Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics study cited in the contribution received from the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

[9] World Bank, "Gender and transport in MENA: case studies from West Bank, Gaza and Yemen", MENA Knowledge and Learning Quick Notes Series, No. 21, March 2010.

transport costs for women (approximately 15 to 20 per cent higher than for men) and for poor people living at the outskirts of towns since they are forced to take multiple means of transportation to reach their destinations.[9]

14. High unemployment levels among women do not only impose economic hardship on women but also tend to lead to high levels of food insecurity. Other factors include large families, higher proportions of women and children and low levels of education. As a result, food insecurity affects 61 per cent of Gaza Strip households and 25 per cent of West Bank households, with higher rates of food insecurity among female-headed households than male-headed households in both the Gaza Strip (68 and 60 per cent) and the West Bank (27 and 22 per cent), respectively. Age is an important factor in the level of food insecurity among female-headed households since older women are less likely to find employment than younger ones. For example, the average age of women heads of food-insecure households is 62 and 56 years in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively.[10]

15. Access to education, training and recreational activities remained critical for the economic empowerment and well-being of women. Available data show that while the overall quality of education available to women is variable, access to and participation in education by women is increasing.[11] The Occupied Palestinian Territory ranked in the medium range (76 out of 128) of the Education for All Development Index,[12] and the enrolment rate and performance of girls has improved. In the 2009/2010 academic year, girls represented 47.9 per cent of the total student population in UNRWA-run schools in the Gaza Strip and 57.5 per cent in the West Bank.[13] Approximately 62 per cent of all teachers in basic education were women.[3] The ongoing conflict, insecurity and movement restrictions, however, continued to pose serious challenges to women's and girls' access to education, training and recreational activities.

16. Gender stereotypes continued to constrain women's access to education and training and have an impact on the choice of education and training courses with concentrations of females and males in distinct fields of study. Curricula, especially in secondary schools, contributed to the portrayal of stereotypical roles for women and men.[3] Girls are also encouraged by their parents to pursue education paths that are in line with their perceived future roles as mothers and caregivers.[3] Dropout rates were higher for boys at the primary level (1.3 per cent, compared with 0.5 per cent for girls), and higher for girls at the secondary level (3.8 per cent, compared with 3.0 per cent for boys).[11] Concerns remained regarding the linkage between the rate of girl dropouts at the secondary level of education and at early marriage.[3]

17. Illiteracy remained a serious obstacle hindering women's economic and political empowerment. While only 1 per cent of youth (15-24 years) was illiterate, illiteracy among adults was much higher, with 75.6 per cent of all illiterate adults

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[10] Socio-economic and food security survey conducted by FAO/WFP on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, cited in the contribution received from the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

[11] ESCWA, "Social and economic situation of Palestinian women: 2006-2009" (E/ESCWA/ECW/2009/Technical Paper.1) (May 2009).

[12] The Education for All Development Index provides a composite measure of progress, encompassing access, equity and quality; see UNESCO *Education for All Global Monitoring Report: Reaching the Marginalized* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010).

[13] UNRWA, "UNRWA in figures" as of 1 January 2010.

being women.[14] Illiteracy rates among food-insecure heads of households were notably high, with 64 per cent in the West Bank and 34 per cent in the Gaza Strip.[10]

18. Health conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are closely linked to the socio-economic consequences of the occupation. Acute and chronic forms of malnutrition continued to pose major problems, in particular in the Gaza Strip. Post-traumatic stress and other psychological and behavioural disorders are an emerging health priority.[15]

19. Significant concerns persisted with regard to maternal and child health due to mobility constraints and insufficient infrastructure. Many pregnant women were unable to reach UNRWA health centres on time because of movement restrictions.[15] According to UNIFEM, difficulties in accessing medical facilities were more acute for rural women, given the number of checkpoints between villages and the lack of hospitals in rural areas (see A/HRC/13/68/Rev.1, para. 10).

20. Due to a shortage of delivery beds, inadequate conditions and space in delivery rooms, and inadequate basic facilities, most women were being discharged one to two hours after normal delivery.[3] While the United Nations does not maintain a specific monitoring mechanism on the issue of Palestinian women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints, no births at checkpoints have been reported by the Palestinian Authority and Israel since January 2009 (see A/HRC/13/68/Rev.1, paras. 7-9).

21. The political and economic conditions affected women's and girls' health and nutrition, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Food insecurity contributed to micronutrient deficiency and high levels of anaemia in infants and pregnant women.[16] In herding communities in Area C, stunting reached up to 38 per cent of children aged 6 to 17 months. Of the surveyed girls, 7.8 per cent suffered from acute malnutrition, compared with 4.8 per cent of boys; 16.7 per cent girls compared with 14.1 per cent boys were acutely underweight.[17] The prevalence of anaemia increased among 9-12-month old infants, from 49 per cent in 2008 to 57 per cent in 2009.[18]

22. Mental health issues affected women both as primary caregivers and as patients. In families with mentally ill members, women bore the brunt of the care. Women made up the majority of professional mental health providers who worked often under substandard conditions.[18] Some 30 per cent of children screened at UNRWA schools were reported to have mental health problems (A/HRC/12/48, para. 1282). Several reports emphasized that poverty and movement constraints left women unable to care for their children and relatives leading to anxiety, panic attacks, disturbed sleep and eating patterns, and depression (A/HRC/12/48, para. 1280).[19]

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[14] UNESCO, *Global Education Digest 2010: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World* (Montreal, Canada, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010). Available from http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/ged/2010/GED_2010_EN.pdf.

[15] WHO, "Health conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan" (Sixty-third World Health Assembly (A63/INF.DOC./6), 2010).

[16] UNICEF, "Humanitarian action 2010: mid-year review: Occupied Palestinian Territory".

[17] "Food security and nutrition survey of herding communities in Area C", joint UNRWA/UNICEF/WFP household survey, April 2010.

[18] Ministry of Health, nutrition surveillance system (2009).

[19] See also UNIFEM, *Voicing the Needs of Women and Men in Gaza: Beyond the Aftermath of the 23-Day Israeli Military Operations* (2009).

23. Palestinian women continued to be exposed to different forms of violence, including those related to the ongoing Israeli occupation and factional tensions, as well as domestic violence, so-called "honour" killings and trafficking. During the reporting period, out of a total of 68 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces and settlers one was a woman, and among 215 injured persons 90 were women.[20] Fear of Israeli violence, as well as the Palestinian factional conflict, is a daily source of stress and insecurity for the entire population.[21]

24. Data on violence against women remains scarce. Women and girls are reluctant to resort to women's and human rights organizations, the police and courts for a number of reasons, including the lack of awareness of the availability of assistance mechanisms and the strong stigma attached to reporting abuse. According to non-governmental organizations, forensic clinic data confirmed 499 cases of rape; 13 women had been killed in so-called "honour" killings in 2009 (nine in the West Bank and four in Gaza); and 126 women had left their homes due to sexual harassment, rape or physical abuse by a family member.[22]

25. The current legal framework in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is a significant obstacle to gender equality.[21] While the Palestinian Basic Law, which is the main source of legislation, establishes that Palestinians shall be equal before the law and the judiciary without distinction based upon sex,[23] gender-based discrimination persists in law in a range of areas, including the penal code and laws on marriage, divorce, custody of children and inheritance. For example, in the West Bank, the law provides for a reduced sentence with respect to an offence in a "state of great fury".[24] Laws in force in both the West Bank[25] and the Gaza Strip[26] relieve rapists who marry their victim of any criminal responsibility. None of the existing laws cover marital rape.[21] In addition, weaknesses in the judicial systems have led to an increase in the use of customary law, at times to the detriment of women's rights.[21]

26. A draft national strategy to combat violence against women has been developed, but not yet finalized. It promotes a legal framework and institutional mechanisms to protect women from violence and also promotes improved social protection and health services for women victims of violence. In the field of law enforcement, the Palestinian Cabinet requested in February 2010 that the President suspend legal provisions on "family honour".[3]

27. There is growing support among Palestinians for women's rights and gender equality. A UNDP survey revealed that Palestinian attitudes towards women's rights

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[20] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Protection of civilians" database, 1 October 2009-24 August 2010, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

[21] UNDP, "MDG attainment in the Palestinian context" (see footnote 6).

[22] Numbers and figures presented by the Al-Muntada Coalition of Palestinian non-governmental organizations at the violence against women workshop, January 2010; cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

[23] Article 9 of the Amended Basic Law (promulgated 18 March 2003), published in the *Palestine Official Gazette Special* issue No. 2 (19 March 2003).

[24] Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 (1960), article 98, cited in UNDP, "MDG attainment in the Palestinian context".

[25] Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 (1960), article 308, cited in UNDP, "MDG attainment in the Palestinian context".

[26] Egyptian Penal Law No. 58 (1936), article 291, "MDG attainment in the Palestinian context".

exhibited strong support for a revision of the legal code in order to boost women's equality. 70-80 per cent of survey respondents stated that women should be equal to men before the court, the law, at home and at work.[27] Based on a joint study by UNESCO and the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Palestinian political representatives are gradually recognizing their responsibility for gender equality issues and starting to take actions towards the advancement of women.[28] In addition, a regional initiative between the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, and non-governmental organizations in February 2010 discussed amendments of the Personal Law (marriage age, child custody, legal status for women, shared budget and divorce).[29]

28. Palestinian women participate in both formal and informal realms of political life. In 2009, women represented 20 per cent of the ministers of the Palestinian Authority.[30] Women's informal participation in political parties has been significant, at least in terms of visibility and effectiveness, if not in terms of numbers. With the factional split and the freeze of the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006, efforts to promote women's political participation drastically decreased, including with regard to women's active role in peacebuilding and negotiation. Though women were in leadership roles within the Palestinian Authority and the de facto authority, they were often excluded from strategic meetings and decision-making processes, absent from the internal political reconciliation process[30] and did not participate in permanent status negotiations.[31]

29. A cornerstone of Palestinian social, economic and political activity has been the multifaceted volunteer work done by women's associations, which have not only organized to promote peace and political change but also implemented practical projects targeted to support communities to meet their daily needs. These associations have undertaken diverse work, including establishing nursery schools and kindergartens in an attempt to facilitate women's integration into the public sphere and to improve parenting practices and childcare; offering legal advice; challenging patriarchal assumptions about women's capacities and rights including through popular education campaigns; organizing protests and building strategic partnerships with Israeli women in the peace movement.[32] According to data made available by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, representation by

[27] UNDP, "Palestinian perception toward the human security situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

[28] UNESCO Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center, descriptive report on the main survey regarding knowledge, perceptions and practices of Palestinian Legislative Council members towards gender (June 2010), cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

[29] Contribution of ESCWA to the present report.

[30] United Nations, UNIFEM and UNDP, *Women Count for Peace: the 2010 Open Days on Women, Peace and Security* (September 2010).

[31] ESCWA, joint study on the theme "Status of Arab women: means to strengthen the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding" (December 2009).

[32] See Manal A. Jamal, "Gender and human security: Palestine revisited", Working Paper Series, No. 08-09 (Dubai, Dubai School of Government, 2008); Cynthia Cockburn, *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis* (London, Zed Books, 2007), cited in the UNDP publication *Human Development Report 2009/10: Investing in Human Security for a Future State* (2010).

Palestinian women in decision-making positions such as boards of trustees and board members of non-governmental organizations was approximately 30 per cent.

30. According to information made available by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in April 2010, 34 women were held by Israel in detention centres and prisons, where they were reportedly deprived of medical treatment (see A/65/35, para. 35). As of August 2010 there were 23 Palestinian women held in Palestinian prisons in the West Bank where access to basic material needs and respect for the rule of law were limited.[33] The gendered effects of detention are manifold given women's and men's different roles and responsibilities in dealing with the effects of imprisonment of family members. Women shoulder the responsibility of maintaining households and raising children when male family members are detained.[34]

III. Assistance to Palestinian women

31. The overall environment of occupation and conflict, movement restrictions and violence continued to be cross-cutting issues that permeated every aspect of Palestinian women's lives. Despite some positive developments, the overall humanitarian needs in parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained acute. Limits to women's movement affect their access to health care, education and socio-economic opportunities and their ability to participate in decision-making processes as well as their caregiving and domestic work.

32. Such conditions have to be considered in terms of the assistance provided to Palestinian women by United Nations entities. Section III sets out six key areas: education and training, health, economic empowerment and livelihoods, violence against women, power and decision-making and institutional arrangements.

A. Education and training

33. United Nations entities continued to develop and implement a range of initiatives to improve access of women and girls to education, training and recreational activities, including provision of scholarships for universities and vocational education and training to strengthen women's participation in the economy and labour force. In 2009/2010, through the UNRWA Department of Education, 533 female students benefited from technical and vocational education and training at the Ramallah Women Training Centre and 357 benefited in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA promoted women's rights and gender equality as universal human rights values through its human rights curricula for grades 1 to 9. UNIFEM offered educational services at community-based women's centres in remote areas of the West Bank and provided 100 young girls and women in the localities of Auja and Fasayel in the Jordan Valley with literacy classes, computer training and English language courses.

[33] UNIFEM project on protection of Palestinian female prisoners and detainees in Palestinian prisons, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

[34] Institute of Women's Studies, Birzeit University, "The impact of Israeli mobility restrictions and violence on gender relations in Palestinian society: 2000-2007", cited in the UNDP publication *Human Development Report 2009/10: Investing in Human Security for a Future State* (2010).

34. The United Nations Children's Fund supported 4,000 female students with life skills education, such as conflict management and team skills, and provided recreational activities for 300 low-performing schools, targeting more than 11,000 female students in grades 2 to 6. Through its 100 adolescent-friendly centres, UNICEF offered educational and recreational activities to more than 20,000 young women. During the reporting period a total of 12,931 women accessed the UNRWA project on social and recreational spaces for women and girls in the Gaza Strip, where they engaged in discussion forums in and classes in such areas as the arts, sports, skills-building, computers and literacy. UNRWA ran its fourth Summer Games programme, providing over 250,000 children in the Gaza Strip with sports and arts activities, raising awareness within the community of the importance of physical exercise for girls and providing girls with spaces (e.g., swimming) they are not ordinarily able to access.[7] On two occasions, facilities of the Summer Games were attacked by armed and masked men, but UNRWA ensured the successful continuation of the Games.

B. Health

35. UNRWA continued to be the main comprehensive primary health-care provider for Palestinian refugees and continued to promote a comprehensive life cycle approach to health with a strong focus on primary health care and prevention. A number of United Nations entities supported improved access to health services in the area of reproductive health.

36. Building on a pilot project aimed at improving the quality of maternal and newborn health in two hospitals in the Gaza Strip in 2010, WHO expanded the project activities to another six hospitals in the Gaza Strip. An estimated 24,000 mothers have benefited from the project activities since the launch of the pilot phase in April 2009. The project managed to increase the mother's stay at the hospital from one hour to up to six hours. Medical checkups were performed for mothers and newborns, early initiation of breastfeeding was encouraged, and basic health education messages were provided for both the health of mothers and newborns.

37. In terms of direct services, UNICEF delivered micronutrient supplementation to more than 50,000 pregnant women and 55,000 children. UNRWA delivered food aid to 7,838 pregnant women and nursing mothers. Maternal health-care services were provided to refugees in 20 primary health-care centres across the Gaza Strip. Additionally, family planning services were provided to about 23,141 clients.

38. The United Nations Children's Fund, WHO and UNFPA worked on improving infrastructure, processes and skills among maternal care providers, in direct cooperation with the Ministry of Health. With the support of UNICEF, the Ministry developed a reproductive health handbook and equipped six neonatal units targeting 10,000 high-risk newborns.[7] Female health workers were trained on the integrated management of childhood illnesses as well as on breastfeeding practices and nutrition protocols for severe acute malnutrition. Activities were also undertaken to raise women's awareness of breast cancer and to promote self-examination. From March to July 2010, over 6,000 women were screened for breast cancer. In that context, WHO presented the first Palestinian 3-D animated movie based on a true story about Fatenah, a breast cancer survivor. More than 200 training sessions were held for more than 3,000 doctors and nurses (three quarters of whom were women).

In order to break the professional isolation of Gaza Strip health professionals, WHO supported training for doctors and nurses in modern practices in maternal and neonatal health care in cooperation with the Al Makased Hospital in East Jerusalem. In cooperation with the Directorate of Hospitals, UNFPA organized training in emergency obstetric care protocols for all Ministry of Health maternity workers in the West Bank and in two maternity wards in Gaza (see A/65/77-E/2010/56, para. 37). UNFPA also continued to provide equipment, medications, and supplies to isolated communities.

39. In regard to other areas of health, UNFPA provided clinical and psychosocial services and health education to 30,000 women in the most underprivileged areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip through support provided to four women's health centres. The UNRWA community mental health programme in the West Bank included group, individual and peer-to-peer counselling. A total of 37,668 beneficiaries (of which 71 per cent were women and girls) participated in group activities, and 109,612 beneficiaries (of which 61 per cent were women and girls) in individual counselling from January to September 2010. UNICEF provided psychosocial support to more than 16,000 women and 10,000 girls. The work of UNDP on HIV/AIDS continued under the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods

40. Assistance by United Nations entities concentrated on covering basic livelihood needs and job creation and on enhancing women's access to entrepreneurship, particularly in rural areas and agriculture. UNRWA and FAO focused on households with female or no breadwinners. Female-headed households accounted for approximately 50 per cent of beneficiaries of the WFP Social Hardship Cases General Food Distribution programme. In addition, WFP provided daily supplementary food items to 63,312 and 92,454 students in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively. In the West Bank, WFP worked with women's centres that prepared the school snacks in exchange for cash and WFP food baskets.

41. As one of the largest employers in the area, UNRWA employed more than 10,000 staff members in its operations across the Gaza Strip. In addition, 35 per cent of all beneficiaries of the UNRWA emergency job creation programme were women, who were trained in embroidery, recycling and honey production, and who were recruited as skilled and unskilled labourers. UNIFEM and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education carried out the second phase of the women community-based school canteen project, which provided healthy school snacks. It targeted 230 schools and involved 28 women's organizations in 12 districts. The programme highlights the economic contributions of women and women's centres, while improving the health of schoolchildren.

42. To enhance women's economic opportunities, support was also directed towards women's entrepreneurship and access to credit. During the reporting period, the UNRWA Microfinance and Microenterprise Department in the Gaza Strip disbursed 1,126 loans to female entrepreneurs (out of a total of 3,080 loans). Women received more loans than men in the agricultural and industrial sectors, and represented more than one third of participants (585 out of 1,609) in microenterprise

trainings. UNRWA also provided 12 grants to women to enable them to begin income-generating projects.

43. The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Palestinian Occupied Territory (MDG-F)[35] launched a gender equality employment strategy. A series of measures were implemented, including three needs assessments for vocational education centres and women cooperatives, and the training of 27 women leaders and 15 gender audit certified trainers. A training workshop on gender and international labour standards was held, focusing on gender equality in the workplace.

44. A number of programmes implemented during the reporting period specifically addressed the role of Palestinian women in agriculture. For example, FAO focused on boosting fruit and vegetable cultivation and on improving water management and income-generation for female-headed households. Livelihood skills for youth were enhanced through the FAO Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools project, which were implemented in 26 schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza, benefiting 1,200 girls and boys by teaching both agricultural and life skills (see A/65/77-E/2010/56, para. 51). UNIFEM provided rural women with business counselling/training to enable them to better manage their own small income-generating projects.

D. Violence against women

45. With assistance from United Nations entities, 50 social workers of the Ministry of Social Affairs were trained in ways to combat violence against women, an existing helpline was upgraded and a coalition of women's and human rights organizations was established (Amal Coalition to Combat Violence against Women in the Gaza Strip). Additionally, staff of the Palestinian Legislative Council were trained on the collection and analysis of data of violence against women.

46. As a result of a conference on so-called "honour" crimes organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in March 2010, a task force was established comprising representatives from the Palestinian Authority, United Nations entities and civil society organizations. The task force is to address the issue throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Within the framework of the global campaign entitled "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence", and as part of the campaign of the Secretary-General entitled "UNiTe to End Violence against Women", UNIFEM organized in Ramallah in December 2009 the second festival to combat violence against women, which was attended by more than 800 people and supported by 10 United Nations agencies. In that context, MDG-F organized the joint campaign entitled "Women and Men are a Nation: Together to End Violence against Women" in the Gaza Strip, which included a festival, radio spots, a mural painting and a study day.

47. With regard to assistance for survivors, UNIFEM continued to support the Mehwar Centre in Bethlehem, a multi-purpose service structure addressing violence

[35] UNIFEM, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNRWA and ILO established the joint Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) Joint Programme, "Gender equality and women's empowerment in the Palestinian Occupied Territory". Unless otherwise indicated in the present report, "MDG-F" refers to that programme.

against women in a holistic way. During the reporting period, a total of 93 cases of "at-risk" women, women survivors of domestic violence and 17 children were sheltered and received psychosocial, legal, health, vocational and socio-educational counselling. UNFPA continued to provide outreach psychosocial support through trained social workers in Nablus, Jenin and Jericho municipalities (ibid., para. 50).

48. Implementation of a UNFPA project continued in five selected areas of the West Bank, enhancing the capacity of 20 staff of the Ministry of Social Affairs in the area of violence against women. In a separate initiative under MDG-F, UNFPA provided training to 120 rural women on such issues as gender equality and gender-based violence, facilitating 1,400 regional awareness sessions. UNRWA organized a gender-based violence-training for the staff of Women's Programme Centres, educated 360 teachers on early marriage and conducted separate group discussions for women, men, girls and families from April to September 2010 serving 1,000 participants. A workshop organized by UNRWA, on the theme "Community of practice in building referral systems for women victims of violence", brought together best practice examples in this area.

49. With the support of the Palestinian non-governmental organization Sawa, UNIFEM issued a report entitled "Trafficking and forced prostitution of Palestinian women and girls: forms of modern day slavery", the first of its kind on the issue of trafficking and forced prostitution of Palestinian women and girls.

E. Power and decision-making

50. The tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security provided an opportunity to highlight the importance of the participation of Palestinian women in decision-making. The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process emphasized the importance of women's involvement in peace negotiations, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts in an op-ed article in the Israeli and Palestinian press and delivered a speech to a committee of the Israeli Knesset. As part of the "Global open day for women, peace and security", held in the context of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East Peace Process, UNIFEM and UNFPA met with a number of women peace activists in the Gaza Strip to discuss women's concerns regarding peace and security within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Participants identified four key priorities of Palestinian women, namely: supporting women's political participation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; addressing the increase in domestic violence and all forms of violence against women; supporting the economic empowerment of women; and raising awareness of the humanitarian impact of the occupation and blockade on women and girls.[36] The outcomes of the event were communicated to the Security Council in October 2010.

51. With support of the Government of Spain, UNIFEM and the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace hosted a conference on advancing women's leadership for sustainable peace in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and worldwide, in Madrid on 1 and 2 June 2010.

[36] United Nations, UNIFEM and UNDP (see footnote 30).

52. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia provided training for the Ministry of Women's Affairs on how to draft a national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and launched its biennial flagship publication *Status of Arab Women: Means to Strengthen the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding*, which addressed the situation of Palestinian women and changes within traditional gender roles as women have taken on new responsibilities within their families and communities.

53. To strengthen institutional development in the area of women's rights, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council participated in two workshops organized by ESCWA and other partners on the roles of parliamentarians in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

F. Institutional arrangements

54. Several initiatives were undertaken to support institutional development by the Palestinian Authority and by United Nations entities. These included mainstreaming gender perspectives in cross-sectoral as well as sector-specific plans and programmes in agriculture, justice, culture and humanitarian assistance. Activities focused on capacity-building, awareness-raising and tracking the use of resources.

55. In March 2010, the Palestinian Cabinet endorsed the cross-sectoral national gender strategy within the framework of the Palestinian Development Plan for 2011-2013. The gender strategy, developed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, focuses on the gaps and challenges in all sectors and proposes interventions through the collective action of various Palestinian Authority ministries, women's organizations and civil society organizations.

56. The United Nations Development Fund for Women assisted the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development in elaborating the national gender strategy and action plan, as well as in developing national gender indicators related to the strategy's priority policy areas.

57. In the agricultural sector, UNIFEM with the cooperation of FAO assisted the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture to undertake a gender analysis of the agriculture sector strategy, within the framework of the Palestinian Development Plan. FAO continued to work actively with the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Women's Affairs to strengthen responses to the needs of women in agriculture, and involved stakeholders in the dissemination of good practices.

58. United Nations entities supported Palestinian authorities in strengthening capacity on gender mainstreaming. UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People facilitated a forum among Palestinian Authority ministries, United Nations entities and civil society organizations to discuss gender justice, the promotion of international conventions and instruments on gender equality, and relevant legislation applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Ministries of Women's Affairs and of Labour participated in a training workshop organized by ESCWA on mainstreaming gender in the plans and programmes of the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Women's Affairs participated in an expert group meeting on the revision of guidelines to increase the effectiveness of national women's machineries in the ESCWA region.

59. In the area of culture, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, in coordination with programme partners of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund programme on culture and development, organized a workshop on gender mainstreaming and culture to train staff members from several ministries on concepts related to culture and gender mainstreaming, and ways to use such concepts in the development of gender-sensitive cultural policies.

60. In order to track the use of resources to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs supported the roll-out of a gender marker — a tool that measures whether or not the design of a humanitarian project ensures and advances gender equality — in the 2011 consolidated appeals process. Through the process, all clusters of humanitarian response received specific guidance on how to mainstream gender equality within sectors. Preliminary data suggested that compared with the baseline of the 2010 consolidated appeals process, there was a significant increase in gender-responsive projects in the 2011 process. Under the leadership of UNSCO, several meetings were held with members of the donor community to ensure harmonization in development aid effectiveness and meeting commitments on gender equality. In that regard, United Nations entities in partnership with relevant line ministries took initiatives that would allow for tracking of internal and external resource allocations for gender equality priorities and women's needs at the local level.

61. Efforts were also under way to mainstream gender perspectives within the work of United Nations entities. The UNRWA gender action plan mainstreams gender into each of the agency's programme areas. In 2010, UNRWA developed a new approach to the development, design and location of community and public facilities in Gaza, incorporating gender dimensions.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

62. During the period under review, the overall humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained challenging. Despite improvements in education for women, there was little positive evidence of their social, economic and legal empowerment. The continued closures, checkpoints and roadblocks limited the access of Palestinian women and girls to health-care services, employment and other opportunities. The recent relaxation of movement restrictions should be continued.

63. Efforts continued at the national, regional and international levels to bring about a just and lasting negotiated agreement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including through direct negotiations. The tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) highlighted the need for more systematic efforts by all parties to ensure women's full participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives in the region, including in the permanent status negotiations.

64. United Nations entities should continue to provide assistance to women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and refugee camps, particularly in areas such as education, health and employment. Special efforts should be made to support the Palestinian Development Plan for 2011-2013, including its cross-sectoral national gender strategy. Enhanced efforts should be made to achieve

women's full participation in decision-making processes at all levels, including in the political and economic spheres.

65. In order to support women's and girls' economic and political empowerment and well-being, increased attention and continued support is needed to improve access to quality education and training that translate into employment opportunities. Strengthened efforts are needed to address stereotypical attitudes that have an impact upon educational and training choices, including through revisions of school curricula and textbooks, and through targeted efforts to combat harmful practices such as early marriage, which may contribute to girls dropping out of school.

66. When supporting employment for women, attention should be paid to ensure that assistance programmes and projects do not reinforce traditional gender divisions of labour, which limit job opportunities for both women and men. Concrete actions are required to increase the participation of Palestinian women, in particular young women, in the labour force. Assistance provided by United Nations entities should not only focus on expanding women's labour force participation into non-traditional sectors but also assist women in better seizing the full benefits and profits from their economic activities. The issue of women's economic empowerment needs to address engagement by women in the full range of activities involved in bringing a good or service to the final consumer, in order to enable them to reach beyond the local market to national and international markets. United Nations partners need to systematically address the bottlenecks preventing women's advancement in those areas, including women's lack of access to productive resources and opportunities; women's limited access to effective transportation of goods; and lack of capacity, resulting from limited education and training opportunities.

67. In order to facilitate the mobility of Palestinian women for personal or employment-related reasons, attention should also be given to increasing their access to safe and affordable means of transport, including public transport to semi-urban and rural areas. The public transportation system could be reviewed and analysed in order to ensure that schedules and connections are supportive of both women's and men's transport needs.

68. Food security continued to be a high priority. Access of women and men to employment often contributes to successful strategies to address food insecurity. Strong, comprehensive measures, including safety nets, employment and/or other income-generating activities are therefore needed to ensure that women have access to safe, adequate, nutritious and affordable food, and to increase the access to technologies, credit and markets by women smallholder farmers.

69. Enhanced efforts are needed to eliminate all forms of violence against Palestinian women and girls. In addition to establishing provisions for penalizing and punishing perpetrators, legal frameworks on violence against women should mandate support for victims and survivors, prevention measures and training for relevant officials. Ending impunity for violence against women requires awareness-raising, training for law enforcement officials and gender-sensitive procedures and processes. The Palestinian authorities and United Nations entities should collaborate to provide support and services for women and girl victims and survivors of violence. The legal framework needs to be harmonized with the provisions of the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and measures for its effective implementation need to be implemented.

70. The Palestinian Authority and some United Nations entities have taken measures to mainstream gender perspectives into their work, including through gender-sensitive strategies and programmes. Further efforts are needed to fully integrate a gender perspective into all international assistance programmes through gender analysis, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the use of gender-responsive budgeting processes. Additional coordinated efforts are needed to assess the impact of assistance and the extent to which it addresses and matches women's needs. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to benefit Palestinian women and girls and should systematically assess and report on the impact of those efforts.

71. Some progress has been made in recent years in addressing gender equality and the empowerment of women in United Nations studies and reports on the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Such publications should systematically focus specific attention on gender equality perspectives and incorporate information on the situation of women and girls, including in reports by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, as well as in other relevant reports of the Secretary-General.